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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 18301

STATE FOR S/CT WHARTON

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: KPRP PTER CO
SUBJECT: COLOMBIA: 1988 ANNUAL TERRORISM REPORT

REF: A) STATE 357278, B) BOGOTA 5976

¶1. COLOMBIA HAS A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WHOSE INSTITUTIONS ARE UNDER ATTACK BY FOUR MAJOR SUBNATIONAL GUERRILLA GROUPS AND BY NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. FAR FROM BEING A SUPPORTER OF TERRORISM, COLOMBIA IS THE VICTIM OF SUSTAINED TERRORIST ATTACKS. THE COUNTRY'S INSTITUTIONS ARE THREATENED THROUGH FREQUENT ATTACKS BY INSURGENTS ON RELATIVELY SMALL RURAL TOWNS AND POLICE STATIONS. IN 1988 THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED TREND TOWARDS LARGER-SCALE ATTACKS BY COMBINED GUERRILLA GROUPS AGAINST HARDER MILITARY TARGETS. ATTACKS AGAINST ECONOMIC TARGETS, PARTICULARLY THE COUNTRY'S NATIONAL OIL PIPELINE, HAVE INCREASED OVER THE LAST YEAR.

¶2. INSURGENT VIOLENCE CAN BE CONSIDERED INTERNATIONAL ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT ONE GROUP'S ACTIVITIES HAVE AT TIMES CROSSED COLOMBIA'S BORDER INTO VENEZUELA, WHERE KIDNAPPING AND EXTORTION SCHEMES WERE CARRIED OUT, AND TO THE EXTENT THAT THE GROUPS' RECEIVE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT.

¶3. ANOTHER SOURCE OF TERRORIST VIOLENCE EMANATES FROM THE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKER ORGANIZATIONS. WHILE NOT ESSENTIALLY POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, NARCOTICS TRAFFICKER INSTIGATED VIOLENCE HAS A POLITICAL EFFECT IN THAT MANY SUCH ACTIONS ARE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO INTIMIDATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND INSTITUTIONS IN AN ATTEMPT TO ASSURE THEIR OWN FREEDOM TO PURSUE THE NARCOTICS TRADE AND ENJOY THE BENEFITS THEREOF. NARCOTICS-RELATED TERRORISM DOES HAVE AN INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER SINCE THE TRAFFICKERS USE VIOLENCE TO EXTEND THEIR NARCOTICS NETWORKS BEYOND COLOMBIA, INCLUDING INTO THE UNITED STATES.

¶4. NARCOTICS TERRORISM DIRECTED AT THE COLOMBIAN JUDICIARY IN 1988 ACCOMPLISHED ITS GOAL OF MAKING THE PROSECUTION OR EXTRADITION OF MAJOR NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS TOO DANGEROUS FOR MOST OFFICIALS. PRESIDENT BARCO RELEASED A STATEMENT IN SEPTEMBER STATING THAT THE BILATERAL EXTRADITION TREATY WAS A PRINCIPAL VICTIM OF NARCO TERRORISM DIRECTED AGAINST THE SUPREME COURT AND THE COUNCIL OF STATE. A MAJOR TRAFFICKER, JORGE LUIS OCHOA, WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON ON THE LAST DAY OF 1987 WHILE THE GOVERNMENT WAS ATTEMPTING TO FIND A WAY TO EXTRADITE HIM. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THREATS AND BRIBES WERE RESPONSIBLE.

¶5. THOSE ACCUSED OF ASSASSINATING THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE IN 1984 ARE CONNECTED TO MEDELLIN CARTEL CHIEF PABLO ESCOBAR. THEY WERE TRIED IN 1988 AND A JURY FOUND THEM INNOCENT. THE JUDGE THREW OUT THE VERDICT, DECLARING IT NULL AND VOID BECAUSE IT CONTRADICTED THE EVIDENCE. A NEW JURY WAS SO SEVERELY THREATENED THAT THE JUDGE DECLARED A MISTRIAL SHORTLY BEFORE A VERDICT WAS TO HAVE BEEN RENDERED. SEVERAL JUDGES AND OFFICIALS WHO TOOK FORCEFUL ACTIONS AGAINST THE NARCOTICS

TRAFFICKERS HAVE BEEN FORCED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

MAJOR COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORTS

16. THE GOVERNMENT ISSUED STATE-OF-SIEGE DECREES AND ENACTED SWEEPING ANTI-TERRORIST DECREES IN JANUARY 1988 IN RESPONSE TO THE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS' KIDNAPPING AND KILLING OF ATTORNEY GENERAL CARLOS MAURO HOYOS. THE DECREES DID NOT ADDRESS EXTRADITION. THEY DID, HOWEVER, EXPAND THE DEFINITION OF TERRORISM, ENHANCE THE POWERS OF THE POLICE WITH REGARD TO ARRESTS, SEARCHES AND CONFISCATIONS, CREATE SPECIAL JUDGES AND POLICE TO DEAL WITH TERRORISM, AND PROVIDE STRICT RULES FOR THE USE OF HABEAS CORPUS. TWO PROVISIONS OF THE DECREES WERE SUBSEQUENTLY OVERTURNED BY THE SUPREME COURT, SPECIFICALLY THOSE ITEMS ALLOWING POLICE AND MILITARY FORCES TO MAKE SEARCHES AND ARRESTS ON THE BASIS OF SUSPICION AND WITHOUT WARRANTS, AND REQUIRING REGISTRATION OF PROPERTY AND INHABITANTS IN AREAS DEEMED TO BE USED BY TERRORISTS.

17. IN ADDITION, COLOMBIA HAS WORKED FOR ADOPTION IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES OF RESOLUTIONS CONDEMNING THE ILLICIT CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRADE. THESE EFFORTS ARE DESIGNED TO LIMIT THE AVAILABILITY OF SOPHISTICATED CONVENTIONAL ARMS TO WEALTHY TRAFFICKERS AND GUERRILLAS.

18. THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA HAS MADE NO PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM.

MCNAMARA